Mint of the United States

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RG104 E-11 Box 43 1850-53 San Francisco

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Mint of the United States Philadelphia

May 1st 1852

Sir:

It is no doubt well known to you that among the private coinage of California are to be found pieces so closely resembling in its designs those of the national coin, as to require a close examination for the detection of the difference. Most of this coinage has I believe [ended], but that of Moffat & Company, perhaps more nearly in imitation of our own than any other, is still kept up.

Although this coinage is not very different in value from what it purports to be, and is not issued with any fraudulent intent, yet from its [inferiority] in <u>fineness</u> to our own coin, it tends, so far as it is mixed with the national coin, to degrade the assays and therefore to discredit the coin itself. There is good reason to believe (on the authority of the chief of the Bullion Office of the Bank of England) that an inferior assay return on a shipment of American coin was entirely due to the admixture of some of those California pieces, which from their resemblance to the genuine were not separated.

Another inconvenience, which specially applies to the coinage of Moffat & Co. is, that from the employment of that firm by the Government, to assist the California Assayer in his duties, a kind of official authority is supposed to be given to their coins, which should be recognized by the Government and the Mint. I enclose for your perusal a slip from the *Ledger* [newspaper] of this city containing a communication which, though incorrect in many of its statements, indicates this feeling. I send also the reply which I thought it my duty to make thereto.

By the act of March 3,1853, it is made a penal offence to "falsely make, forge, or counterfeit…any coin in resemblance or similitude of the gold or silver coin which has been or may hereafter be, coined at the Mint of the United States."

It certainly appears to me that the issue of coin of the same apparent size with our own, with the head of Liberty for the obverse, and the eagle for the reverse, is such a "resemblance or similitude" as this law contemplates; and I therefore respectfully suggest that measures should be adopted to arrest its further manufacture.

So far as Moffet & Co. are concerned, their connection with the Government is such that an instruction from the department that they should change the designs of their coin which are in "resemblance" of our own, would no doubt suffice.

I am not aware that any other imitative private coinage is now carried on; but if such be the case an announcement by authority that states it is [xxxxx] illegal [xxxx], I [xxxxx xxxx] suppression.

very respectfully your obed't serv't George. N. Eckert Director.

Hon. Thomas Corwin, Sect'y of the Treas'y.